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REMARKS

Claim 1 has been amended to define over the combination of Pfenninger, Jr., et al., Cartwright et al., and Kidzun et al., cited in the office action of June 7, 2002.

Specifically, the above office action on page 2, paragraph 4, lines 1 and 5-6 recites "Pfenninger, Jr., et al. discloses in figure 1, . . . a gasket 22 *encircling the bearing having ribs and on an outer surface of said gasket.*" (italics added).

It is respectfully suggested that, according to the above statement in the office action, the bearing consists of the inner ring member 18 of the mounting means as well as the anti-friction bearing 11, 13, 10 since the ring 18 has the ribs encircled by the gasket 22 and the ring 18 and the bearing move together axially and radially relative to the ring 17 because of the rubber gasket 22. (Pfenninger, Jr. et al., column 3, lines 25-30).

Amended claim 1 has been further limited to recite that *the resilient material of the gasket encircles and engages a cylindrical surface of the outer race of the bearing.* Further, *the resilient material of the gasket has a cylindrical inner surface and this inner surface engages the cylindrical outer surface of the outer race of the bearing and the resilient material of the gasket has portions interdigitated with the ribs of the housing.*

In view of these amendments, the resilient material of the gasket of Pfenninger et al. can only be defined as the

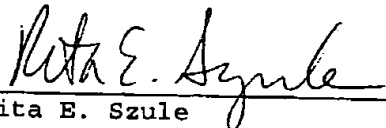
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portion 22. Further, the resilient material of the gasket 22 of Pfenninger, Jr., et al. does not contact the outer race of the bearing which has a continuously extending cylindrical surface. The surface of the bearing of Pfenninger, Jr., et al., if it includes the outer race 11 as well as the ring 18, is a ribbed surface. The surface of the bearing of Pfenninger, Jr., et al., if it includes just the cylindrical outer race 11, does not contact the resilient material of the gasket. Thus, it is respectfully submitted amended claim 1 is structurally distinguished from Pfenninger, Jr., et al. as well as the remainder of the cited prior art and its combination.

Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the claims by the current amendment. The attached page is captioned "Version with markings to show changes made."

Please charge any deficiency or credit any overpayment in the fees for this amendment to our Deposit Account No. 20-0090.

Respectfully submitted,


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VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADEIN THE CLAIMS:

Claim 1 has been amended as follows:

1. (Twice Amended) A vehicle steering column comprising:

an axially extending input shaft for connecting to a vehicle steering wheel, the input shaft being rotatable about an axis upon rotation of the steering wheel;

a housing at least partially enclosing the input shaft;

a bearing interposed between the housing and the input shaft and supporting the input shaft for rotation about the axis, the bearing having an inner race engaging the input shaft and an outer race, the outer race comprising a continuously extending cylindrical surface;

the housing having at least one series of axially spaced, annular ribs that at least partially extend around the axis of the input shaft and around the outer race of the bearing, axially adjacent annular ribs being separated by an annular groove; and

a gasket made of resilient material interposed between the outer race of the bearing and the ribs, the resilient material of the gasket comprising a tubular member encircling and engaging the cylindrical surface of the outer race of the bearing, the resilient material of the gasket having a cylindrical inner surface and an outer surface, the inner surface engaging the cylindrical surface of the outer

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race of the bearing, and the outer surface engaging the ribs
of the housing, the resilient material of the gasket having
portions interdigitated with the ribs of the housing to resist
relative axial movement between the gasket and the housing.